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A
S E R M O N
On OCCASION of the much lamented
D E A T H

Of the late REVEREND
Mr. *JOHN ABERNETHY*,
A Protestant-Dissenting MINISTER,
first in *Antrim*, and next in *Dublin*, where he
died, *December 1st, 1740.*

Preached in *Antrim*, *December 7, 1740,*
By *JAMES DUCHAL, A. M.*

WITH AN
A P P E N D I X,
CONTAINING

Some brief MEMOIRS of the Lives and Characters
of the late Rev^d. Messieurs *THOMAS SHAW*,
WILLIAM TAYLOR, *MICHAEL BRUCE*,
and *SAMUEL HALIDAY*, Protestant-dissenting
Ministers in the Counties of *Down* and *Antrim.*

Published at the Desire of the MINISTERS of the Presbytery
of *ANTRIM.*

By *JAMES KIRKPATRICK, D. D.*

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S E R M O N, &c.

GENESIS l. 24.

—*I die, and God will surely visit you*—

IN looking into the many controversies that have been in the world concerning almost every subject, *Moral, Philosophical, or Religious*, many very surprising things are met with; but nothing more so than the attempts that have been made, by reasoning and argument, to explode the notion of a Providence and Faith in God; attempts to persuade men that there is no such thing as a creating and governing *Mind*, that gave being to the Universe, and superintends all affairs in it; a *Mind* perfect in wisdom, of infinite goodness, and irresistible power and energy; capable therefore of preserving and governing his own World, of conducting all things to the most desirable issues, and unchangeably determined to do it. Whatever vain men may say, these perfections of the Creator are so plainly apparent in the works of his hands, that no wonder such as deny and argue against them should be reduced to the poorest and most contemptible shifts, in accounting for things, and at last to the greatest absurdities. If they will acknowledge no God, they must deny all *design* in the works of Nature: all which the learned call *final causes*; that is, must deny that the eye was made for seeing, the ear for hearing, the palate for tasting, the arms and hands for labour: and so in a thousand instances. And when men become capable of running into such absurdity as this, *plain sense* will think them scarcely fit to be reasoned with at all.

The world was for many ages in full possession of those principles, concerning the *Divine Being* and *Providence*, that

are fundamental to all Religion and sound Philosophy. But, as it has been often seen in like cases, weakness, and superstition abused them to bad purposes. Schemes and systems of Religion were invented and propagated, that were very absurd, and of pernicious tendency to corrupt the manners of mankind ; as well as to break in upon the tranquillity of the mind by superstitious dread : and which put men upon services of the *religious kind*, that, tho' perfectly insignificant to the professed purposes of them, were laborious and expensive ; in some instances, inhuman and barbarous. When this had been too generally the state of the world, Philosophy was called in by a celebrated school to it's aid ; and took a method very effectual, I own, to banish superstition ; but which at the same time banished all Religious Principles, without any exception in favour of the most rational and evident. The existence of God, it is true, was not generally denied ; but the absolute denial of Providence, and of any relation of God to the universe, as the Author and Governor of it, amounted indeed to the same thing : and shewed that the authors of this philosophy, while they complied with a way of speaking, generally received, for form's sake, effectually undermined all that was meant by it. And how amazing is it, that men, setting up as masters of reason, and to instruct the world in truth and nature, should ever have published, and professed to defend it, that the world was the effect of *chance*, or of a *necessity*, altogether inexplicable, but perfectly void of design ! That they should do this in contradiction to the plainest appearances of things, and the strongest evidence of reason !

It is not my intention to pursue this argument any farther. But were the principles of these Philosophers loaded with no such shocking absurdity, they must to all ingenuous minds appear most unfriendly to mankind ; and cast a most disagreeable gloom over the universe. Who could relish existence in a *fatherless* world, left in all, even the most important occurrences and concernments, to chance ; or under a necessity in which it is confessed there can be no wisdom, no goodness ? left in innumerable obvious or unseen dangers, without any *refuge*, any *power*, from which safety or deliverance is to be asked or hoped ! in a state, which, notwithstanding all the strongest appearances of design, order, and harmony, is in reality perfect chance, and therefore perfect confusion ! forced to bear whatever might befall, without seeing any kind intention, any wise purpose, any just cause, that might reconcile the suffering mind, and render patience a virtue !

On the contrary,

How pleasing, as well as just and rational is it to believe, that the world is the work of a *Mind*, infinitely powerful, wise, and good, in which the whole scheme was contrived, before Creating Power gave existence to any part ; that according to the original design it is constantly governed ; which design, worthy of infinite Wisdom and Benevolence, shall be most happily and effectually served : that all that can come to pass, whether affecting the world in general, or individuals, is under the immediate notice and direction of the first Cause, so that every thing shall contribute to serve the best purposes ! Here the human mind rests in perfect tranquillity ; and Virtue triumphs, as upon very good evidence assured, that no scheme could be framed in the *Eternal Mind*, in which existence should not prove *blessing* and *happiness* to the good and worthy ; in which they should not be constantly under the favourable notice of the Divine Eye. To the *name of the Lord*, therefore, the righteous flee as to a *strong tower* ; in the sufferings of life submitting with dutiful and peaceful resignation to the wise and good Arbiter of all, and hoping from Him deliverance, in the season that shall be fittest and best ; persuaded at the same time, that these very sufferings, however painful, shall in the issue prove real advantages. From the same confidence towards God, the virtuous and believing derive fortitude of spirit, in all appearances of danger, and threatenings of future evil, in the prospect of Death, and of an endless state, at present invisible. For to him who believes that God reigneth, and that nothing can befall him but what is the very best that could befall him, no future event can be formidable. A most pleasing light is cast upon universal nature, upon all the possible revolutions of time, and of eternity. *Say among the Heathen, the Lord reigneth : the world also shall be stablished that it shall not be moved. He shall judge the people righteously. Let the heavens rejoyce, let the earth be glad, let the sea roar and the fulness thereof ; let the fields be joyful and all that is therein ; then shall all the trees of the wood rejoyce before the Lord, for he cometh, he cometh to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with truth. Ps. xcvi. 10.* The fixed and pleasing confidence in God, the tranquillity of Spirit, which the dying *Joseph* in the words of my Text expresseth, sets the advantages of faith in a most engaging light : *I die, and God shall surely visit you, and bring you out of this land, into the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.*

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While the attentive reader peruseth this passage, his imagination cannot fail of presenting to him the friends and brethren of this great man, standing around him in the most affecting forms of sorrow. They came to receive the *last commands* of *Joseph*, and his *final adieu*. This must to ingenuous and tender spirits be very painful. *Joseph* had done great honour to his father's house, as a person of distinguished worth, and whom Divine Providence had eminently favoured and exalted. It was reputable to be of his kindred. And he had been to his relations a steadfast and affectionate friend ; discovering upon the most important occasions a tenderness and generosity of spirit, that are exceedingly amiable. You know from the story of his life, that when he had it in his power to have taken most severe revenges for the unnatural and barbarous injuries he had suffered at the hands of his brethren, he was so far from entertaining any such thought, that he solicitously laboured to convince them of his being perfectly reconciled. And tho' their crime had been such as could admit of no apology ; yet he endeavours to make their minds easy, by saying the only thing he could say to answer that end ; *viz.* That what they had done, under the direction of a wise and good Providence, had proved, in the issue, greatly to the advantage of that family, and of the world around them. *As for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.* Gen. 1. 20. The reader will easily perceive that this extraordinary interposition of Divine Providence did not excuse their guilty intentions ; but he will at the same time see in these expressions of *Joseph* the strongest characters of a tender, good, and generous heart. He is solicitous that they should not be angry with themselves, that they should suffer no pain or anguish upon his account. Amazing ! And so far as we are informed by the history of his conduct afterwards towards the house of his father, it was all of it worthy of this generous delicacy of affection. His station in *Pharaoh's* court gave him great opportunities of serving their interest, which he did not fail of improving. He supported and protected them, and took all the wisest methods of making their state and circumstances easy ; acting the part of a father indeed, toward the whole family, and like a man that relished and enjoyed his own greatness principally on account of it's being serviceable to them.

How long he continued in court, or what his circumstances were in declining life ; whether he had withdrawn from affairs, or suffered any of those changes of fortune, to which all ministers of state even the greatest and best are liable ; or was
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still possessed of his high favour and power, the history does not inform us. And so we are at a loss to know, whether he continued during life, capable of serving his friends as effectually as he had done at the first. But supposing he was not, surely ingenuous and affectionate relatives must lament exceedingly, and have the most painful sensations that tender spirits feel in that kind of grief, when they saw such a brother, friend, indeed father, going down to the *house of silence*. He that had been their glory, their protection, their support, was to be no more.

As for this illustrious person himself, he discovers a constant and easy mind. He saw that he must die. But as a confirmed believer in God, he expresses full assurance that God would *visit his brethren*; that he would in proper time bring them into the Land of *Canaan*; and takes an oath of them, that they should carry up his bones along with them. He loved the ground, that God had promised to the sacred Tribes. He would have his remains deposited there. Not solicitous what should come of a lifeless carcase, a piece of insensible clay; but rather in testimony of his being an heir of the promise made to *Abraham*. Probably with the same view *Jacob* ordered that he should be buried in *Abraham's* tomb. These men rejoiced in the Covenant of God; were firmly persuaded that his promises to them should be fulfilled; they foresaw pleasing and happy days of their posterity in the Land of *Canaan*. It was natural enough then, that they should order their bodies to be buried in it, as the permanent possession of the family. But the *New Testament* directs our thoughts to much greater things than this, as the objects of their Faith. *Canaan* was to be their temporal inheritance; but *they sought* and believed they should obtain a *better Country, that is, an Heavenly*. *God was not ashamed to be called their God, for he had prepared for them a city*. Of this, *Canaan* was understood to be a pledge. In such prospects as these the faith of the Patriarchs triumphed. And with what pleasing satisfaction and tranquillity of soul, must *Joseph* be supposed to enjoy them. A man of approved integrity and virtue, and who would with just confidence promise himself a share in whatsoever Divine Goodness had provided for the children of *Abraham*. Those children in whose hearts and lives, the faith and holiness, by which he was so much distinguished, were piously imitated. Happy Man! Who could with an unruffled mind, and an erect spirit, see himself in the last stage of life, and direct the disposal of his bones, as a testimony of his fixed confidence towards God.

At the same time he ministers the most substantial consolation to his mourning friends, *I die, but God shall surely visit you, &c.* Our friends and benefactors die. Men that have been our refuge in distress, and our pleasing entertainment in a prosperous state. But God lives for ever. He will be always present to the world; govern it according to the measures of unerring Wisdom and Goodness. In him we are to trust. *Put not your trust in princes nor in the son of man in whom there is no help. His breath goeth out, he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish. Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God. Which made Heaven, and Earth, the Sea, and all that in them is; which keepeth truth for ever.* Ps. cxlvi. 3—6.

To the mourning Israelites, to Joseph at parting with them, it must be unspeakably comfortable to know, that the God of Abraham, was the true God, the *Most High*, the *Possessor of heaven and earth*, that he was the God of Abraham and his seed by express covenant. That he had engaged himself to take care of them; to bring them into the Land of *Canaan*, as their inheritance; that his Eye and his Heart should be towards them continually. His Power they knew, was all-sufficient; his Goodness infinite. They had already seen many and most signal interpositions of his Providence on their behalf. And they could have no doubt of his Faithfulness, and persevering to do them good. In this faith, their solicitous minds might have quiet rest. Joseph dies. But the God in whom Abraham's seed are to trust, lives eternally. Their dying friend that had done so much for them, was the gift of his Providence. And never can that Providence be at a loss to find effectual means of serving the purposes of his Goodness to his servants. Let them, therefore, in the most threatening appearances, with peaceful and easy minds hope in Him. 'Tis a just homage to his Almighty Power and Infinite Grace; and the most substantial confession of our faith in his Holy Providence.

Upon the passage thus explained, we may make the following observations.

First, That there is a weakness in that affection, however amiable it may appear, which fixes it self in attachments to our friends of eminent worth, as if we were never to be separated from them. No eminency of worth will be a protection from Death and the Grave. *He seeth that wise men die.* The time of our enjoying any temporal advantages is, indeed, short. *It remaineth that they that rejoyce,* rejoyce in a most valuable friend, which does, in truth, give the very highest relish of

of life, *be as though they rejoyced not.* The great thing, surely, that we are to attend to, is, That we make the proper improvement of our intimate acquaintance with distinguished characters ; that we labour solicitously and constantly the imitation of them in the practice of virtue. That we eye their spirit and conduct as a living law to us. And so act that we may be accounted worthy of the honourable relation of friends to them. But while we must foresee that death shall part us from them, let Faith in God direct our hopes to a state, in which such friends meet, to be separated *no more.* Let the noblest kind of all ambition, inspire us with warm desires, and give vigour to our endeavours, so to live, that according to the grace of the Gospel, we may be accounted worthy of fellowship with them, in the highest, eternal Bliss.

II. Let no Mortal be the object of our trust. That any such should be so, plain sense, as well as our Bibles, pronounces it weakness and folly : And perhaps, tho' insensibly, it often grows to a degree that has impiety in it. When men strongly rely upon their friends, that are powerful, generous and true, they are too apt to forget God. And *He*, the great Ruler of all, to whom we owe our friends, as all the other comforts of life, is dishonoured by a guilty negligence. Far be this from believing minds. While our spirits rejoyce in the important assistances we receive, by the favour of Providence, from our friends ; let us remember at the same time, that we owe all to God, as the first Cause, and Spring of action ; and that He still can do what is necessary for us, when our friends are removed. No event of this kind, or any other, can limit His Power, or take from His All-sufficiency. In His holy and gracious Presence, and under the shadow of His Wings we are safe. What is good, the Lord will unquestionably give. *His Name* is our *strong tower.* Let it be considered that a constant regard to God only, as the object of our trust and confidence, while it is one of the noblest branches of that Worship of the heart, we owe him ; so it will preserve us from the pain and anguish of mind, to which such as make men their confidence, are always exposed, and frequently suffer. " What shall become of me now ? Whither shall I " turn my self ? I have lost my all, and see nothing but misery before me. No stroke like this. Would I had never " been born, or had not lived to see this day. " This or language of the same kind, uttered with all the wild appearances of a desponding and distracted mind, we not unfrequently hear. And perhaps with all the passion and vehemency that are in it, it scarcely expresses the agonies of the heart.

would not earnestly desire, and labour to get into a state of mind, that should prove an effectual preservative from all such intenseness of grief and despondency of spirit? A state in which the soul might possess it self in pleasing tranquillity ; and in which losses of friends and other disappointments, tho' felt with tenderness and delicacy enough of passion, yet should not overwhelm men, and make existence it self appear punishment and misery to them. And, every one will be sensible that there is but one way of attaining to such a state, (of attaining to it, I say, for I am not at all now speaking of a complexional insensibility) and that is, establishing ourselves in the Faith of God, and his wise and gracious Providence governing the world ; keeping upon the mind, and at all times present to it, a fixed persuasion that no event can come to pass in our lot, but what is fit and right ; but what, did we know enough of the connexion of things in the Divine Administration, would be the matter of our choice : No event but what in the issue will prove gainful. Such a sense of things ever obtaining in the mind, would be an impregnable fortress in the *day of evil*. And faith, thus possessing the soul, raises it above unjust dependences upon things precarious, and fixes it in a reliance upon God alone ; so that it can foresee and meet with the greatest disappointments, without being lost to it self. *They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be moved.* As this is the manifest tendency of faith in God, and as it has been often seen to produce such effects, we have much reason to suspect, that when the severities of Providence prove too hard for our spirits, our faith is culpably defective ; at least on such occasions may be assured, it does not exert it's proper energy, whether that is owing to habitual weakness, or present vehemences of passion, that shut out all serious and deliberate thoughts. But let it ever be remembered, that integrity of life, and true holiness, are necessary as the foundation of faith, on our part. For, *tho' God heareth the Prayers of the righteous, He ever will be far from the wicked.* Sound philosophy and the holy Scriptures assure us of the Divine Existence, Perfections, and Providence ; but it is only by means of consciousness of integrity, that we can derive consolation from them.

Lastly, Tho' it does not become us to make our most valuable friends the objects of our trust, yet as the entertainment they give is the most innocent, elegant, and improving entertainment of human life, and their services most sensibly oblige us, it is unnatural not to know and feel our loss, when they are removed ; not to pay the tribute of ingenuous grief to
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their memory. 'Tis but a just acknowledgment of their worth ; and, when under proper regulations, softens the spirit into a temper and sentiments, very profitable, I may add, pleasing. All the human heart then exerts itself in the tenderest passions, and is prepared to receive impressions, that may be of very lasting advantage.

I have been directed to those Meditations by a very melancholy Event, which I suppose is known to you all, I mean, the death of your late pastor, Mr. *Abernethy*. You expect, and no doubt your thoughts are hastening to some account of his character. Without farther preface, I offer an imperfect delineation of it in the following particulars.

He was the worthy son of a most venerable father, the late reverend Mr. *John Abernethy* of *Colerane* : who was an eminent christian ; a learned divine ; a vigilant laborious pastor ; a man of deep penetration and solidity of judgment, of an almost unparalleled strength of memory *, of an extensive public spirit, of undaunted courage ballanced by great wisdom in counsel, of a delicacy of taste for correct speaking and writing ; and, a man of a thorough gentlemanly behaviour, of polite address. An happy conjunction of faculties and qualities, which seldom meet in one man. His distinguished merit was highly regarded at the Court of our late Glorious Deliverer, King *William* ; where he stayed above one year and an half, executing a commission with which he had been charged by his brethren in the north of *Ireland* in the year 1688, on behalf of their liberties †.

Our Mr. *Abernethy* was a gentleman whose countenance spoke boldness and manly resolution. There was in it an air of greatness and gravity, not without some mixture of awe ; but this last happily tempered by the sweetness of a graceful aspect, habitual cheerfulness, and good humour. These upon

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* His memory was so strong, that he delivered his Sermons in the pulpit, as exactly in the very words in which he had premeditated them, as if he had read them publicly from a manuscript, tho' they were generally of an hour's length ; and after many days, could dictate them to an amanuensis, without the omission, or alteration of any one sentence : So that neither himself nor his audience were at any loss by his having never committed any of his Sermons to writing ; which was not the effect of choice, but of necessity : His hand being so bad as not to be legible, and he so very slow in writing, as he could not undergo the fatigue, and expence of time it must have cost him.

† While he was in *London*, his son *John* (then a boy) was left with a relation at a distance from his mother and her children, which was the happy occasion of his being preserved from being in the famous siege of *London-Derry*, wherein all her children died : While *John* was sent to *Scotland* to his grand-father (by the mother) a worthy gentleman, the representative of an ancient family, and chief of the name, *Walkingshaw* of *that Ilk*. Providence, by this means, kept him for a blessing to the church, and an honour to his country.

proper occasions, enlivened by a sprightly wit, which was always correct, and the most distant possible from levity, were entertaining to his friends. A negligent air, and the appearances of inattention, which were wholly natural and unaffected, covered the most exact application to what he was about, so that strangers were often surpris'd to hear him speak justly, and reason with accuracy, when he did not seem to heed what he said. In the faculties of his mind, he was quite above the common rate of men. He had great quickness of apprehension and readiness of thought ; a genius and invention that always pleas'd, very often surpris'd ; a clear and penetrating discernment of men and things ; and a memory strong and faithful, that scarcely upon any occasion fail'd him. With all this, he was as patient of thought and enquiry as any person I have ever known ; and had a mind unclouded by that sort of occasional and unaccountable gloom, which often hangs over and depresses weaker spirits ; so that his faculties were always his own. With a mind so endowed, it was not possible that an industrious application to study, for a course of many years, should not furnish him with a great compass of useful knowledge. He knew, indeed, a great deal not only of books, but of affairs, and the world ; and knew how to make his understanding useful to others for their instruction and entertainment. It must have been an unfortunate company, in which he thought fit to converse, that did not receive both, and into which pleasing expectation did not enter with him. He never made any thing afraid, but vice or impertinence, and was one of those happy few of whom their friends often complain, they have too little ; but never one complain'd that he had too much. His very presence gave joy to his friends. In difficult and perplexed turns of life, he was their refuge, and they thought themselves safe in following his advices. He had, indeed, a peculiar faculty in quieting and composing ruffled and painful minds. And the apparent wisdom of his counsels necessarily begot a pleasing dependence upon them.

The purity of his manners from his first appearances in the world, to the last, was unspotted ; he had a relish for the severities of virtue, that absolutely forbad mean indulgences. Perfectly temperate, I should rather say, abstemious, and not unfrequently to a fault. He avoided all appearances of evil ; and was constantly attentive with the most curious exactness, to all the decencies of life and conduct. So that virtue appeared in him in all it's strength and lustre, and yet without the unsociable stiffness, the sourness of rigour, which in many, otherwise

otherwise worthy characters, render it deformed and disagreeable.

Those that were acquainted with him in early life know, but perhaps would scarcely be credited in the accounts they are able to give of the course of religious discipline he pursued ; and his piety and devotion towards God. No man lived more in Heaven ; no man in whom the Spirit thence derived, of *power, love, and of a sound mind*, more appeared. Many hours—days—frequently returning, shut up from the world, and conversing with God, and his own heart. In these exercises he set a fair pattern to others, and contracted those habits himself, that made life one continued approach to God, and a blessing to all around him. What pleasing enjoyment of himself must result from such a combination of natural abilities, refined and hallowed by Religion in it's highest eminencies ; and what a happy preparation for doing and bearing whatever was appointed for him ? Accordingly his patience and firmness in adverse circumstances, and in working his way through difficulties, commanded the admiration of all his friends ; he bore without complaint, as if insensible.

The social virtues adorned him above most men. He had passions naturally strong ; but under such correction, that it was usual for his acquaintances to speak of his temper, as a thing quite unmoveable. Happy the persons that lived under his roof ; joyned to him in the most sacred relation of life ; or in that of children, kindred, or otherwise. They experienced the sincerest and most permanent affection ; had daily before their eyes the living representation of what is most excellent and amiable in human nature ; and were happy in the constant entertainment of his conversation, his useful instructions, and most faithful care. Families blessed with such advantages, as his was, must either be very happy, or utterly inexcusable.

He had a mind formed for friendship ; and there was in his friendship nothing inconstant or capricious. He could bear much in it without changing. He was indeed sparing in the more delicate appearances and external professions, but never failed in important acts. A very little said by him was justly accounted a great deal ; and his friend was sure that whatever he said, if there was opportunity, he would do more.

The *general calm good will* was very conspicuous in him. He was ready to serve all that he had opportunity of serving ; and ever discovered a benevolence too generous to brook those shackles and confinements, that in many cramp nature and thwart it's genuine tendencies. It soon appeared from his public performances that he saw the injustice and pernicious effects

effects of the Party Spirit in religious matters. And there was nothing against which he more warmly and industriously pointed the efforts of his reason and eloquence, from first to last ; with his utmost force of persuasion recommending that Charity, that cordially embraces *true worth* wherever it is found ; and knows none of the narrow little distinctions, that, in low spirits or entangled with prejudice, are the objects of most flaming Zeal. His very heart was in this Cause, and it had visibly the ascendant in his whole life. He constantly endeavoured to communicate that generous, which is the truly Christian, Spirit that had taken possession of his own soul, to all others ; and this with such success, that the remarkable prevalence of Charity at this day, in those places which were for many years his scene of action, is in a great measure owing to him. And he had a greatness and firmness of mind, not to be moved by clamour and noise, or other more sensible inconveniences, that are seen not seldom to divert weaker minds from pursuing what is right and fit, and from supporting the best of all causes. And as this patronizing with so much Zeal the cause of Christian Liberty, will be acknowledged by all that knew him, to be one principal part, so I hope by many it will be esteemed the glory of his character.

And as he was above all low and narrow prejudices in Religious Principles, so no man over whom the spirit of the world had less power ; always ready to serve the cause of Truth, Virtue, and Charity, at any expence of labour or private interest ; of which his life afforded several eminent instances. And surely no person with greater exactness obeyed the Great Law, *That we should do to others as we would have them to do to us*. It was a maxim with him, never to believe ill of any man, but upon such evidence, as would oblige him, if a judge, to condemn. This was doing justice to mankind. And if he was slow to believe ill, he was slower still to speak it. His lips were not profaned by that abominable vice. But he knew how to bear being spoken ill of, unmoved. Spoken ill of——A monstrous thing in such a character, and which could be the effect of nothing but prejudices and mistakes in matters of opinion. For tho' he might meet with enemies to his Cause, I dare say, he never met with one to his person. In a word, Truth and Rectitude, good Will and Love, shined in his life, not in passionate speeches and actions, but in a calm, steady, uninterrupted pursuit of what tended to the good of the world about him : That kind of *love* which has the least of human weakness in it, and therefore is the nearest resemblance of Divinity : That love which is under the direction of sound Reason : That knows to do the hardest of all things, to forgive

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an enemy——to afflict a friend, and put him to pain, when it is necessary to his service, which is perhaps, at least to many, the most difficult of the two.

Mr. ABERNETHY had finished his academical studies early, and entered early into the Ministry. Soon after he had passed his trials as a candidate, he received a call from the congregation at *Antrim*, where he was ordained in the year 1703. *August* 16. and in which he continued to the year 1730.——that he removed to the congregation of Protestant-Dissenters, in *Woodstreet, Dublin*. During his Ministry in *Antrim*, he had calls from the old congregation of *Belfast*, from *London-Derry*, and from *Usher's-Key* in *Dublin*; so just and so universal was the reputation he maintained, that no sooner were the most eminent congregations vacant, than they fixed their eyes on him as the fittest person they knew for undertaking the Pastoral Care of their Souls. His first appearances in public promised very considerable things; but he quickly exceeded all the expectations of his friends. His performances always discovered exactness of thought and judgment. Never any thing like confusion in them. Readiness of thought, and invention of an amazing compass, made the composition easy to him. And a clear, composed, and assured mind, with a fluency and choice of words that never failed him, made the delivery so. I speak now of the time in which he made no use of his papers in the pulpit, (which way he discontinued from the time of his settlement in *Dublin*.) But particularly, the fluency of his thoughts in Prayer, which was generally in a Scriptural Style, was surprising, and appeared inexhaustible. His Sermons had many things in them which tho' just and natural, and plain too, yet were not obvious to persons of no more than common invention; this made them entertaining. And a clear, fine, strong voice (tho' it was often much complained of that he did not enough attend to the modulation of it) was an advantage in the delivery. But his great talent lay in elevation of sentiment and strength of reason, which filled others with a wonder that left no hope of being able to imitate. For a good many years, he had a most happy *Pathos*, and a tincture of *rational Enthusiasm* (for surely there is such a thing) that wonderfully struck the imaginations, and passions of the hearers. This in his riper age gave way to more direct addresses to the understandings and reason of men, in a style strong and nervous, and with arguments most cogent and convincing: The whole full of sentiment, and of a most exalted strain; entertaining and profitable to all that would attend, and could understand. The truth is, it was a disadvantage that he found it
extremely

extremely difficult to speak down to the understandings of all. And tho' upon intimations of this kind that were given him by his friends, it may be easily believed he descended as low as he could ; yet he never could, as low as many desired. In his last years, he applied himself more particularly to explain the foundations of Morality and Religion ; to shew the reasonableness of Virtue and a Holy Life. Many of his discourses on these subjects set things in a new light. Reasonings that were used, and published to the world before, are improved. One consistent scheme of religion will be found to run through them ; and all recommended by a most masculine force of persuasion and argument. In the manner of delivering his Sermons there was some variety. The hearer was always pleased and instructed ; but upon some particular occasions when the argument warmed and elevated his own mind, he delivered himself with such an apparent *feeling* of the Truth, and such authority, as not only commanded the attention, but made deep impressions.

While in the *North*, he applied himself to his other congregational labours, according to the rules observed there, *viz.* catechising, visiting families and the sick, as much as his necessary avocations would allow him, with care ; always pointing them to the true ends of Religion, and with good success ; carrying it with tenderness and affection to his people ; ready to serve every one that needed, or could be the better for his assistance. And here it may be proper to observe the uncommon Zeal with which he laboured among those in the neighbourhood, that were of the popish Religion, to convince them of their Errors, and gain them to the embracing of pure Christianity. He conversed much with them in private, as he had opportunity ; and went often into *Killelagh*, where there are considerable numbers of such, prevailed upon them to attend at Sermons he preached at *Loughside* upon their account, and where they would admit that, visited them from house to house. These charitable labours, in which he had the assistance of some neighbouring ministers, he continued at stated times for several years, and they were not without success. For several of the natives embraced the Protestant Religion, and continued in it to their last. Thus he laboured in the *North*. And then to see him in the decline of life, when he changed the scene of action, apply himself to the business of the Study, in reading, meditation, and composing Sermons, with as great diligence as if he had been but just entering upon his ministry, gives us a high idea of his industry and application,

plication, and shews the esteem he had of his work, and his delight in it.

With such ministerial abilities, and a shining private character, Mr. *Abernethy* could not fail of being the delight of his friends. For many years he was admired to a degree that, I had almost said, was too great for any mortal. How often has it been seen that when he began to speak (which upon some important occasions he would do, for a long time together, often *extempore*, with perfect ease and fluency) profound silence has taken possession of a large assembly of his brethren and others, not a little noisy before, and fixed them motionless, till he had ended. Extraordinary respect was paid him, not only by his brethren in the ministry and the people of his own congregation, but by all that knew him. And it shewed uncommon greatness of mind, to bear it without suffering deeply by it ; and that no appearance of vanity was ever known about him. To bear ill usage is great, to bear the veneration paid to Mr. *Abernethy* is much greater ; for that assaults men upon their weakest quarters.

He made a good use of it. His reputation gave him great weight and authority in counsel. And as he had at heart the flourishing of pure, genuine Christianity, and of the dissenting interest as nearly allied to that, he was never wanting, as a principal, in projecting and executing what might contribute to serve that interest. For many years he was considered in the assemblies of ministers, as the desire of their eyes, and a manager of affairs, on whom they might depend. Nor had they ever reason to repent of, or be uneasy at the part he acted in any trust, in which they gave him a share. Mature deliberation in counsel, diligence, firmness and dexterity in execution, were in no person more conspicuous. No wonder he was universally regarded.

I wish I could draw a veil over the occasion on which this circumstance altered. When the cause of *liberty* came to be publicly debated, as he espoused that cause with much zeal and firmness, so he was hardly thought and spoken of by many. And when a public breach of Ministerial Communion between the contending parties could no longer be avoided, he took his lot with the other members of the Presbytery of *Antrim*. But without entering into any of these debates, one thing is certain, that he steadily pursued what to him appeared to be truth, and necessary to support the rights of Men, Christians, and Protestants ; acting agreeably to his own reason, which he could give up to no man, and to the principles of Religion : Inflexible to all considerations that might tempt him to swerve from
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them. His reason must be convinced, or his mind could not be changed. And with what strength of argument, eloquence, and patience of contradiction (for which indeed in all debates, private and public, he was famous) he maintained a cause, that had his heart for many years, in the most public assemblies, is so well known that I shall not need to represent it in particular instances. The persons that signalized themselves in that debate are, most of them, now removed from our world. But I am fully persuaded that men's cool reflecting thoughts, upon their memory, their cause, their defences, their conduct in that matter, will be of much more service than all that argument and eloquence could do, while they had a torrent of prejudices to strive against. *They be dead, yet speak*, and I hope more effectually than ever.

To conclude, the natural abilities that distinguished Mr. *Abernethy*, in conjunction with such sweetness of temper, elevated piety, social virtue, and purity that never knew the stain of crime, make a character which every ingenuous mind must revere, but it seems rather too big for virtuous emulation.

T H E
A P P E N D I X,

CONTAINING

Some brief MEMOIRS of the Lives and Characters of the late Rev^d. Messieurs *THOMAS SHAW*, *WILLIAM TAYLOR*, *MICHAEL BRUCE*, and *SAMUEL HALIDAY*, Protestant-dissenting Ministers in the Counties of *Down* and *Antrim*.

THE Reverend Author of the preceding Sermon designed it only for the pulpit. But the Presbytery of *Antrim*, which met soon after it was preached, made it their earnest request that it should be sent to the Presb. Their design was, to pay a just tribute to Mr. *Abernethy*'s memory; and to set before their own eyes, and before all other Pastors of the Christian Church (as far as these papers will reach) a shining example of ministerial gifts and labours; and, before the world, a beautiful pattern of illustrious virtue and pure religion.

For the same reasons, they advised me to publish the following brief Memoirs of the lives and characters of four of his and their most dear co-presbyters, and most valuable *fellow-labourers in the work of the Lord*. They were prepared by Mr. *Duchal*, from a larger collection he had made some time ago, for his own private satisfaction; of which he has given us an abridgment. The reader will observe, that the four ministers are mentioned in the order of time in which they died.

When we resolved on the publication of Mr. *Duchal*'s Sermon, we knew that another had been preached in *Dublin*, on the same mournful occasion, on the very same day, and by an able Hand too; tho' we had not then seen it, we daily expected it from the press, and that it would appear (as it has since done) in the character of an

excellent performance, that would do justice to the dignity of the Subject, and do honour to the Preacher. But, seeing a Sermon had been preached in *Antrim* (where he laboured twenty seven years) by his successor, we thought we had a providential call to make the publication of it our own act and deed; especially, because of the propriety of annexing to it the following brief Memoirs, composed by the same Author.

Brief M E M O I R S

Of the LIFE and CHARACTER of the Reverend
Mr. *THOMAS SHAW*.

MR. *THOMAS SHAW* was the youngest son of *William Shaw* of *Busb*, Esq; a gentleman of considerable figure in his Country, and of great virtue and worth. When our Mr. *Shaw*, who had a liberal education, had passed through the usual courses of school and academical learning, he applied himself to the study of Divinity, wherein he made very considerable proficiency in the famous University of *Leyden*; and for his farther improvement, staid some time in the city of *London*, conversing there with men of learning and worth. Upon his return to his country, he passed trials as a candidate for the ministry; and some time after, received a call from the congregation of Protestant-Dissenters at *Aboghill*, where he was ordained *December 20, 1710*.

He was indeed an ornament to his character. Candor and integrity of spirit were eminent in him, and very highly and justly celebrated by all that had opportunity of knowing him. He seemed to be utterly incapable of any thing mean or disingenuous. And as it has been often observed, that no man can be thoroughly honest, without a good share of courage and firmness of mind; so the candor and ingenuity of his spirit was supported by a fortitude and resolution equal to that of most men. He knew no pusillanimity or feebleness of temper; and adhered stedfastly to what he judged fit and right. Not sudden, indeed, in forming resolutions; for in cases of difficulty, and in which much inquiry and reasoning were necessary to form a sound judgment, he was at the utmost pains; could not trifle with or lightly pass over objections,
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and was not to be determined by any authority of names however great, if not inspired. But when the evidence of truth appeared clearly to his mind, as he readily embraced it, so he stedfastly maintained it. And he met with considerable occasions in his life, to shew that no temporal interests could prevail upon him to betray it. Few men acted more from conviction of judgment, and less against it. As in matters of doctrine and faith, he was very patient and deliberate in his inquiries; so in conducting affairs, especially in perplexed cases, where wisdom in counsel was much required, he was an excellent member of society. No man could with a nicer eye discern distant dangers, and difficulties, or judge better how they were to be avoided. He had much of the *wisdom of the serpent*, in conjunction with the *innocence of the dove*; with great prudence and discretion advising others, and acting his own part; but with such evident appearances of true worth and simplicity of spirit, that persons who disliked the cause he served, could not help loving the man.

In private affairs he was exceedingly useful to his friends, by his advices, and assistance otherwise; and the whole neighbourhood received great and frequent advantages, by his kind compliance with their desires to interpose in cases which were like to occasion variance and strife. He must needs, in such cases, have much weight and authority; for as no man suspected his understanding, so no man could suspect his integrity. No one surely could be better intitled to the blessing of the *peace-maker*.

His meek and gentle spirit hated all variance. In his public character he guarded, as much as possible, against dissension with his brethren. He thought not the worse of men for differing from him in opinion; and would have done any thing for peace, that could be done, consistently with a good conscience, and the just and necessary vindication of the common rights of Men and Christians. But these he could not give up.

He was a man of a chearful temper, and enjoyed the *merry heart* to a great degree; but a gravity, that exceedingly became him, directed and governed *that* so, as to render it always entertaining, never offensive. He was of a sweet and social spirit, which knew no capricious or unaccountable variations; tenderly affectionate, and very generous. It was delight to him to serve his friends. Their prosperity was reward and happiness to him; and in afflicting cases, he most faithfully sympathized; and these qualities, were greatly recommended in him, by a behaviour that had much of the gentleman

gentleman in it, and so regulated, that the attentive observer might discern a constant care, to say nothing, to do nothing unworthy of himself. “ I had the happiness” (they are the words of the preacher * of his Funeral Sermon, who gave his just character at large, of which this is a short abridgment) “ of an early and intimate acquaintance with him, and continued in it to his last moments ; and for the space of near thirty years familiarity, cannot on the severest reflexion, charge his conduct with an indecency or indiscretion. With as good a right as most men in his age, might he appeal to his flock and all that knew him, as the Apostle did to the Saints of *Thessalonica*, *Ye are witnesses and God also how holily and justly, and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you.*” But his worth was recommended still farther by great *modesty*. He had greatness of mind without haughtiness of spirit. Nothing assuming to himself, while he was prepared to pay all possible respect to others. And tho’ he could do nothing mean, yet he knew how to condescend and stoop to the lowest, whom he had opportunity of serving : Which great numbers, in the neighbourhood where he lived, remember and testify with gratitude.

Religion appeared in him in a manly form, exact and zealous ; but without superstitious weakness. The truth is, Christianity could not be grafted upon a nature more suitable to it. If the sum of that Religion is love, it was like to flourish in a heart so happily formed to be the seat of that affection. *He dwelt in God, for he dwelt in love.* And it was observed that his discourses upon that subject visibly excelled all his other performances.

It could be from no view to secular advantages, that he entered into a public character among the *Dissenters* ; his doing so was rather an expression of self-denial, and shewed plainly, that he meant nothing but the service of mankind, and to promote the interests of Religion.

His performances in the pulpit were judicious ; his addresses to the consciences of men, serious and affectionate. He understood and could well explain the true Christian Spirit. And that abhorrence of vice, and love of virtue, which were deeply rooted in his own soul, prepared him with great earnestness to recommend the one, and in the weightiest manner to persuade men to avoid the other. And tho’ in the Delivery of his Sermons, in which he made no use of papers, he sometimes laboured under disadvantage, from an elocution not the readiest ; yet

* The Reverend Mr. HENDERSON.

yet it was an observation often made by his friends, that in Prayer he was never at a loss : The matter was always pertinent, the language proper, and generally scriptural, uttered with an easy fluency of expression, and with great appearances of a thorough engagement of the heart.

He took great care of the flock committed to him, which, till the unhappy public debates divided it, was a very large one. He made his congregational labours his principal business in life ; noticing carefully the small as well as great ; and bending his utmost endeavours to gain them to the cause of truth and virtue, and to establish them in faith and holiness.

He bore his last illness, which was severe and painful, with much magnanimity, and a fixed reliance upon God. He was happy in the testimony of his conscience, and the hopes of immortality. And, as the public controversies, at that time, were still warm, he took occasion in a few very plain and strong expressions to testify to some intimate friends that were about him, the satisfaction he had in the part he had acted, in which his heart fully approved him. He retained the serenity of his spirit to the last. He died *October*, 1731.

Brief M E M O I R S

Of the LIFE and CHARACTER of the Reverend
Mr. *WILLIAM TAYLOR*.

HE was the son of the Reverend Mr. *William Taylor* of *Randolphtown*, a very worthy Minister, and a man of exceeding good sense. Mr. *Taylor* junior was as much the man he appeared to be as most men I have known. He had a presence that spoke frankness and boldness of spirit, and a good deal of warmth ; and he had, in truth, a warm heart, and a strong, resolved temper of mind. This evidently appeared in all matters of importance in which he was engaged, especially those that most immediately concerned his own station and business in life. But the earnestness of his spirit was under the direction of very good sense and a sound judgment. He could reason with great strength, and was a weighty speaker, mixing the *rational* and *pathetic* very happily. And as the whole of his behaviour was smoothed and polished by good breeding,

breeding, which he thoroughly understood, he was very agreeable in society, and acceptable in the best companies. A man of whom his friends could have, upon no occasion, reason to be ashamed.

When he came to be known to the world by his public performances, there were strong appearances that Religion intimately possessed his heart; and that the natural warmth of his temper was turned into zeal for God. His Prayers and Sermons discovered much ardour of spirit, and were not a little recommended by the useful instruction contained in them, and the propriety both of matter and words that was obvious to every judicious hearer. His performances were never mean; and he had a talent of enlarging much upon the subjects he treated to very good purpose, and of setting them in a clear and strong light. His thoughts were just, and he spoke with much energy, warming his hearer's heart, while he enlightened his understanding.

When the cause of Liberty became the subject of public controversy, he quickly espoused it, and all his life long continued a steadfast friend to it. He never seemed to engage in any thing with more warmth, than in recommending charity, and standing up for the rights of Christians and Protestants. He could not bear any thing narrow and confined, which he accounted utterly unworthy of the Christian Spirit. He bore his share in the defence of Liberty constantly and cheerfully; and not a small one in the difficulties to which the advocates of it were exposed. A convinced judgment, and determined resolution, made him steadfast and immovable in this. And it appeared plainly, that all interests and views of the temporal kind must give way to conscience. His natural firmness was happily hallowed by the Grace of God.

His pastoral labours were very acceptable to the best judges; and they were delight to himself. He seemed to have much pleasure in reading, and meditation, and in composing Sermons; and was happy when he had reason to believe his compositions were pleasing and edifying to others. He took pleasure in being at pains to adorn the pulpit, and to appear in it in a worthy manner; always zealous in propagating the genuine Christian Spirit, and holy love as the very essence of it.

It was a great loss to his own people, and to his friends in the neighbourhood, that he was so soon and so long confined, by very calamitous bodily disorders. He was, in the latter part of his life, very little abroad, and lamented much that he was incapable of performing those Services to his congregation, that required labour and travel. His disorders grew gradually
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upon him, till they overpowered a constitution naturally strong, and that promised longer life. But in his long confinement he wonderfully retained his spirit, and his relish for those enjoyments of life, especially the conversation of worthy friends, that had been the entertainment of his best days.

In a word, he was like himself in life and death, and will be remembred by those that knew him, as a man of real worth, as much a gentleman, and of a serious spirit. He was ordained in *Carncastle*, *June* 14th, 1715, where he continued to his death in *May*, 1734.

Brief M E M O I R S

Of the LIFE and CHARACTER of the Reverend
Mr. *MICHAEL BRUCE*.

HE was lineally descended from the celebrated Mr. *Robert Bruce* a gentleman of an ancient and honourable family; who was bred a lawyer, and pleaded divers years at the barr, as an advocate at *Edinburgh*: whose great zeal for the Reformation, then struggling with great difficulties in *Scotland* in the minority of King *James* the 6th, prevailed on him to drop his lucrative employment, and to enter into the holy Ministry, which he exercised in that city with general approbation. The stand he made for the liberties of his country, and the interest of pure Religion, quickly drew on him the eyes of the whole kingdom, and commanded respect from all true friends to the worthy Cause in which he was engaged. Our Mr. *Bruce*'s father, the Reverend Mr. *James Bruce* of *Killileagh*, and his grand-father, the Reverend Mr. *Michael Bruce* of *Killinshy*, were eminent and worthy Ministers.

Mr. *Michael Bruce* junior, inheriting the virtues of his venerable ancestors, was a person of very uncommon character and worth. His first public essays, as I have been often infor-

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med, did not promise any thing that was extraordinary. But it was not long till he appeared in such a light, that one would have been tempted to think new faculties were sprung up in him ; or that faculties came then to exert themselves, that had been quite dormant before. He discovered great strength of reason and clearness of judgment ; and was as happy as any man could be, in striking upon that which was of the greatest force in any argument, and in urging it with such perspicuity and strength, in the plainest, simplest words, that it was often quite irresistible, and put an end to debate. And indeed in most cases, tho' something might be said, nothing could be *answered* to his reasoning. His talent lay in thinking clearly and with great patience of labour ; and in being able to discern where men could attain to certainty ; and where they must be content to be at a loss, or rest in conjecture. Where thinking and reasoning could succeed, he failed not of making himself master of the argument, and no man was more dextrous in assisting the inquiries of others, or a more useful member of society where improvement in knowledge was aimed at. His temper was capable of rising into warmth in reasoning, but his understanding did not forsake him in it, seeming to grow stronger as his imagination was heated. Many were the occasions he had to exert these admirable powers, on a very conspicuous scene, of which the memory is still fresh among us ; and in which he became distinguished in an extraordinary manner, much admired even by his antagonists.

Strength of reason in Mr. *Bruce* was exceedingly recommended by the modesty of the man ; he knew nothing assuming ; did not contend for victory ; did not aim at exposing any man's weakness, that he might raise a triumph to himself. He was of an humble temper, and had the happy art of maintaining his cause with all possible firmness ; but without any thing that approached to the *haughty* and *insolent*. As he never spoke without something to say ; so he never said it in a manner unbecoming himself. But what is principally to be considered in his character, is the use he made of his understanding and knowledge. His most laborious inquiries had been into the foundations of Morality and Religion. In these arguments he was a Master. The existence and perfections of **God**, the law of Nature, and the evidences of Christianity, were subjects he thoroughly understood, and in treating them suggested many things out of the common road, but very satisfying. He was himself a firm believer in God ; and of the Religion of Christ. And he seemed to be upon no subject as
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thoroughly engaged, as when he argued the reality of natural and revealed Religion.

But the skill with which he managed these arguments, was but a small thing when compared with the influence of them upon his own temper and life. His spirit and conduct were a wondrous transcript of the laws of Christianity. He made it his constant care to do no evil, and with exact caution watched over his words and actions; solicitous to do nothing that his heart should reproach him for; and to apply the powers of reason and conscience in all his conduct. And his life, in truth, seemed to be so habitually subject to those, that to act a wise and good, as well as innocent part, looked in him to be perfect nature.

His Religion was of the most rational kind. A most natural simplicity and ardent devotion appeared in his addresses to God, and an easiness of expression not to be imitated by another. He seemed to have a constant sense of God upon his mind. And upon all occasions, where his wisdom and modesty allowed it, was dropping hints that tended to make the same impressions upon others. He devoutly regarded the providence of God. Thoroughly convinced that all events are under Divine Direction and Influence, he discerned the Sovereign Hand in every thing; most gratefully acknowledging a prosperous lot, and bearing distress with a firmness and decency, that was the admiration of all that knew him. He had a heart not to be broken. And as he did upon many occasions discover tender passions, and a delicacy of sentiment, the reader will ascribe this to the powerful supports of faith in God, and a persuasion that whatever came to pass in the course of Providence was best, rather than to a natural *apathy*. His mind seemed to be constantly serene; and in some very melancholy occurrences so unshaken, that you could not from his temper or way have found out that any thing afflicting had befallen him. His friends were not rendered uneasy by any complaints from him. And this temper he maintained to the last, through a tedious course of illness, in which he suffered much uneasiness, and by which he went down, at last to the grave. His spirit all the while free and easy; his patience persevering, and his submission to the Divine Will dutiful and affectionate. The power of Religion was eminent in him. And he could very exactly distinguish between the appearances of religion that were superstitious and whimsical, and those things that were just and rational. And while he made the one the subject of his constant attention and care, he was free from the other.

His deportment always grave, but never gloomy, his spirit cheerful, tho' most serious.

But as it will be always evident, that he is the godliest man who is most like God ; and that the imitation of God consists principally in goodness ; so the spirit of Religion appeared in Mr. *Bruce* in a most extensive and cordial good will. He laboured to do good to all ; and was always ready to perform any kind service in his power. Descending in this into many things, which a spirit not tempered like his own, would have neglected as trivial, or forbidden as beneath him. A careful observer must have seen in him, that if he had not been genteelly educated, yet the goodness of his heart would have made him a well bred man ; an ingenuous disposition to oblige every one, would have produced effects of the same kind in him, that politeness does in others. He acted from principle what many do from meer habits of ceremony. And where he had no opportunity of serving his friends, they were sure of his best wishes. In cases of distress, his sympathy was most tender, and expressed in the most agreeable manner.

But there was nothing in his character more conspicuous, or worthy of imitation, than those freedoms, which the candor and ingenuity of his temper obliged him to use with his friends. Never surely was there any one less censorious than he. But where he found reason to suspect the conduct of his friends, he could not help explaining himself to them very fully ; and representing, tho' in a mild manner, what he thought weakness and error. But when he had in this manner done justice to his friends and his own mind, he was the readiest man in the world to set their weaknesses in the most excusable light to others. And in him this faithful freedom was the more noticeable, that he was just the reverse of a meddler in other men's affairs, indeed was in many instances rather culpably shy ; which makes it apparent, that he acted purely from principle.

He treated the characters of all men with candor and justice. He was not without wit, that had something of satyr in it. But this was under such management, that no one was put to pain by it ; and he could not suffer the absent to be ill used. A certain friend to such as were run down, so far as justice would allow him to be so. And a man that while he laboured to do honour to human nature himself, endeavoured to make it appear as amiable in others as he could. This nice regard to equity and justice, in points in which many men of none of the worst characters, indulge themselves much liberty, will easily

easily induce the reader to believe, he well deserved the reputation he had obtained in private affairs and transactions, of an inflexibly honest man.

He had with respect to matters of opinion, a most extensive charity for men ; thought not the worse of any man for differing from him, in points upon which vital Religion did not depend ; and deeply lamented the unhappy consequences of straitening the terms of Ministerial and Christian Communion too much. He had a most ingenuous and large spirit ; had his aim fixed on the true ends of Religion, and while these could be answered, was easy about every thing else. In him the cause of liberty and charity had a most reputable and successful advocate. And he did not more honour to it by his admirable defences, than by the amiable purity of his life, and the goodness of his heart. He was a person that always laboured to do good, but did not seem to be at any pains to be thought to do so, which modesty gave an admirable lustre to all his virtues.

His performances in the pulpit pleased much. His style had sometimes the appearances of negligence : His reasoning always labour'd. But he was peculiarly distinguished as a preacher, by a faculty of expressing the noblest sentiments and deepest reasoning in plain easy language. The attentive could hardly fail of understanding him. Many have been tempted to think it easy to imitate him, and yet found it impossible. He was eloquent, but the most distant possible from loquacity ; never a word too much. And when the argument he was upon warmed his own imagination, a power of persuasion that surprised the judicious, attended him. Not rhetorical flowers, but strong, irresistible sense, made it's way into men's minds. The subjects upon which he preached were always such, as had a tendency to establish men in the Christian Faith, and to make their lives holy. He sometimes preached long, but was never tedious. His discourses were always entertaining, and acceptable. There is great reason to lament, that his Sermons are now lost to the world. He wrote but little, and made little use of papers in preaching. A very uncommon strength of memory enabled him to deliver his meditations in the pulpit, with great ease to himself, and without any confusion or loss to the hearers. Nothing could be more remote from ramble and incoherence. Indeed, his memory was so tenacious, that he could for a long time, for years, recollect a discourse, without omitting any material thought that was in it when first delivered ; and, as many judicious hearers thought, with very little variation in the language.

To conclude, He had the testimony of all his hearers to his diligence in discharging all the more private duties of the pastoral office ; and of his near relatives, to the dignity and decency of his life, and the tenderness of his affections, in the several intimate relations of it. And seldom, very seldom surely, is that character like to appear, that may not account it an honour to be compared to Mr. *Bruce* in the simplicity of his spirit, the purity of his manners, and intellectual, especially in ministerial abilities.

He was ordained in *Holywood*, in *May*, 1711, and died *December* 1st, 1735.

Brief M E M O I R S

Of the LIFE and CHARACTER of the Reverend
Mr. *SAMUEL HALIDAY*.

HE was the son of the Reverend Mr. *Samuel Haliday* of *Ardstraw* in the county of *Tyrone*, a venerable old disciple, whose hoary head was a crown of glory, being found in the way of righteousness ; a faithful servant of Jesus Christ, of sixty years standing in the ministry. Mr. *Haliday* junior after a liberal education at the schools in this country went abroad, and by some favourable events in Providence was placed in a station * in which he had opportunity of seeing the most remarkable places in *Europe*, and staying a considerable time in such of them as promised him most improvement. In this stage of life, he contracted a very large acquaintance with men of the higher rank ; but especially with those that were eminently learned, with many of whom he had a familiar intimacy. He at the same time conversed much with books, and laid in a very considerable stock of valuable learning. He fixed in *Belfast* in *August*, 1720.

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* After being sometime in *Holland* he passed his trials as a candidate for the Ministry ; was ordained in *Geneva*, and invited to be chaplain to the regiment now commanded by Brigadier *Austruther*, which invitation he accepted ; and continued in it till his settlement in *Belfast*.

He was a gentleman of polite manners and address, and of a most generous spirit. He was not capable of a mean or dishonest thing. Nor could he bear to appear what he was not. His temper was naturally warm, and his affections most tender. He was a man of genius. He abhorred confusion and perplexity, and all his performances were easy, clear, and nicely correct. He bestowed much pains in composing his Sermons, and delivered them, (which he did for many years without the use of notes) with great exactness. He had a faithful memory, and an easy way in speaking. He had laboured hard and with very good success to form just notions of Religion, to know where it ends, and where superstition and enthusiasm begin. And he set himself with great zeal to recommend a rational and sensible way of thinking in these matters. He had conceived, and always expressed, great indignation at the superstitious inventions of men in the worship of God, and their additions to the laws of the Gospel; and looked upon every thing of that kind as of pernicious tendency, to put the religion of the *means* in the *room* of that of the *end*. It was natural that he should think in this manner, for he had gone a great length in studying the popish controversies; understood them well, and thoroughly discerned the tendency of the popish spirit, which made him jealous of every thing in which *that* at all appeared. But the true fear and worship of God, righteousness, charity, and purity of life, he zealously pressed upon his hearers; and appeared not only in his public discourses, but in the whole of his conduct, to be an utter enemy to all immorality. He was a person of very considerable wisdom and discretion in his conduct, and cautious of the appearances of evil; of great frankness of spirit in animadverting upon what he thought was amiss in his friends; and greatly concerned that they should behave in a reputable manner. He appeared himself, to those that knew him most intimately, to be of a serious spirit, and to have the true ends of life always in his eye. The tenderness of his passions was such, that his mind seemed to be rather great than equal, formed for enjoying prosperity handsomely rather than bearing distress; and yet when he came to decline, and suffer much by a lingering illness, that at last proved mortal, he bore it with great decency and firmness, and bid his adieu to the world in a manner that very well became the constancy of the christian temper.

He

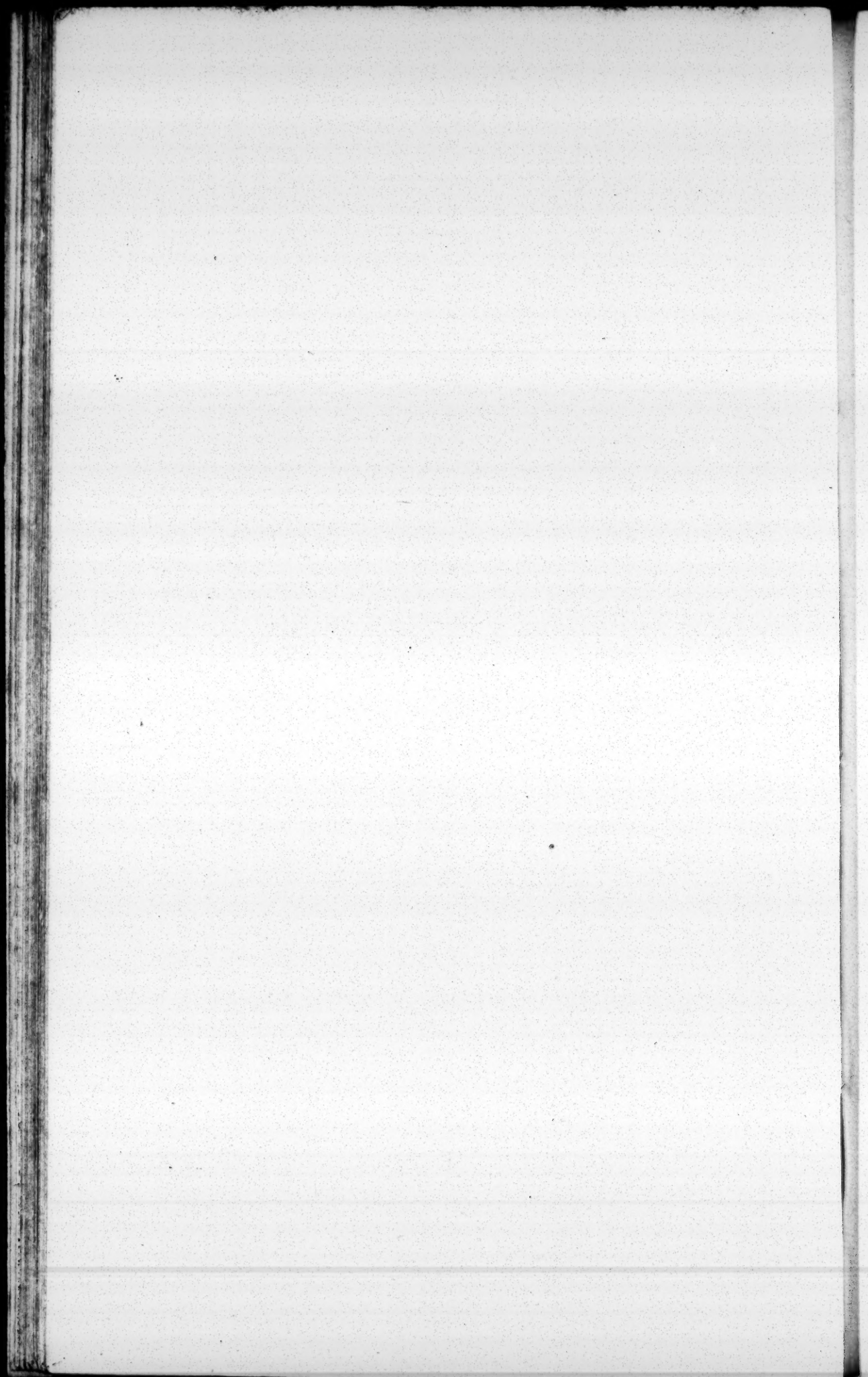
He was a person of a benevolent and charitable spirit ; his heart and hand open to the poor and necessitous. And he had the feelings of sympathy with his distressed friends in great tenderness. He was a friend and lover of mankind, and with respect to matters of Religion, knew no limits of charity, but what the laws of Christ prescribe. He had a great aversion against a narrow spirit ; and was a most zealous advocate for that latitude in communion which Christianity allows. This appears sufficiently in the labour he bestowed in publishing to the world his own Reasons for refusing to submit to terms of communion which he accounted unscriptural, and therefore unwarrantable. He could not bear those counsels and measures that straiten and are, perhaps, sometimes a snare to conscience ; and often lamented that men, otherwise of good character, and that did not seem to approve any thing that was like imposition, should suffer themselves to be tempted into compliances, which tended to hand it down from age to age, and which, sometime or other, might prove uneasy to their own minds ; wishing nothing more earnestly than that the holy Scriptures should be used as the only test of *orthodoxy*, and that all firm believers of them should be joined together in one heart and communion.

Such he was indeed himself : a believer upon full conviction of judgment, and very ready at the arguments by which the Christian Religion is proved to be of Divine Authority ; especially the great one taken from the Resurrection of Christ, which he managed with much skill and dexterity. He often expressed great concern, that men pretending to wit, especially the younger and less thinking, had many of them got into a way of making light of Revelation ; indulged themselves in the common-place raillery of infidels ; and seemed to go into principles as into the fashion of their cloaths, meerly because it was the mode. Persuaded himself, that infidelity was not the fruit of thinking freely, but of not thinking at all, or not thinking enough.

As he was a Christian from conviction of judgment, so he was a Dissenter upon conscientious principle. There is good reason to believe this. For he had many fair opportunities of advancing himself in the world in another way, if he could have fallen in with it. He looked upon the way of Protestant-Dissenters to be most suitable to genuine Christianity, and best calculated for answering the ends of it. This made him zealous in doing what was in his power to support that interest. And he had in him the public spirit to a great degree ; accounting any

any expence of labour, or otherwise, well bestowed, by which the common cause might receive advantage.

Mr. *Haliday* on account of his knowledge of books and of the world, his generous spirit, genteel behaviour, and virtuous conduct, (which have been in this abridgment of his character just mentioned, rather than enlarged upon) could not but be in esteem with men of worth. His company in private conversation was much courted. And he had a great measure of respect justly paid him. But I can't help in conclusion relating one passage, not at all noticeable in his life, otherwise than as it seems to give the true picture of his spirit. A young preacher wanted to be directed by him, how he might most acceptably and successfully perform the services of his station. His answer was, That a man of sense could not fail of success, if he kept it constantly in view, as his great, or rather sole aim, to do good to mankind. And that without this, no abilities, nor rules for conduct would render a man, in sacred ministrations, successful to the world, or with respect to the true ends of Religion, to himself. He died, *March 5th. 1738-9.*



THE
CONCLUSION
BY THE
PUBLISHER.

UPON a serious perusal of the SERMON and MEMOIRS, some obvious reflections will naturally occur to every judicious reader; and others, less obvious but equally just, will be the work of a more mature deliberation. Some things, touched in a transient way and not explained, may seem to need illustration. And, all good men will find themselves disposed to improve the instructions communicated in them, for the service of Religion, and for the honour of Almighty God.

Those who knew the men will be pleased to see the *true pictures* of their intellectual and moral endowments, of their gifts, learning, labours, piety, charity, humility, zeal, temper, and conversation, drawn from the life, with the *lights* and *shades* of their *originals*; to which they carry such a peculiar likeness, that the character of any one of the *five* does perfectly distinguish him from all the rest, and can agree to none but himself. Had there been no names prefixed to them, all who knew the men could have told who they had been drawn for. To them I appeal for the truth of what I say.

Those who had not the pleasure of their acquaintance may rest assured that the public is not imposed upon, by the accounts they receive of these worthy men. For, to say nothing of the known candour and discerning judgment of the author; the concurring testimony of great numbers, of unquestionable veracity and understanding, cannot fail of establishing the credibility of them, in the opinion of all unbiaſſed judges. The characters themselves do carry, in the very face of them, the genuine marks of an honest and fair representation. One can easily perceive, in every one of them, the FOIBLE as well as the AMIABLE and the EXCELLENT; the ray of *Divinity* shining thro' the frailty of the *mortal*, and sometimes obscured by it. For *this treasure they had in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might be of God and not of them.*

While I reflect, with pleasure, on the large measure of Divine Knowledge they had attained; justice to their memory, and the hopes I conceive of it's being useful to many, have induced me to lay before the world a brief account of a *Voluntary Society*, whereof they were members, and which they highly esteemed; regarding it as one of the principal means of their improvement.

In the year 1705, this Society was first erected. It consisted originally of Protestant-Dissenting Ministers, members of different presbyteries, of students of Divinity, and candidates; whose places of residence rendered their attendance practicable. There was only one of the five brethren a member from the first foundation, and the other four came into it, according to the different times of their ordination, or of the commencement of their studies; and the case was the same with respect to all who afterwards joined them. Beside the stated members, there were some who occasionally assisted at their conferences. In a few years, they came to be the object of the attention of the public: Sermons were preached before them, upon the nature and scriptural terms, of the unity of the Christian Church; the nature, and mischief, of Schism; the Rights of conscience, and of private judgment; the sole dominion of Christ in his own kingdom; the nature, power, and effects of excommunication; and, other subjects of that kind. By the accession of new members, and a change in the situation of some of the old ones, *Belfast* became the most central place for their meeting; whence arose the denomination of the BELFAST-SOCIETY. Under this character they were known till the year 1725; in which all the Ministers, of which
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it was then composed, were erected into one presbytery, by the name of the presbytery of *Antrim*. In this presbytery of *Antrim* that society does still subsist, but, alas ! under the disadvantage of having lost five of our ablest hands by death, and the removal of two more into other parts of this kingdom.

The PLAN that was formed, for the business of the SOCIETY, by the unanimous agreement of it's first founders, appears to me to have been the noblest, and the very best for improvement, that could have been contrived by men in their circumstances. It was this. At every meeting, two were appointed to read and seriously consider three or four chapters of the Bible, or more, according to the nature of the subjects contained in them, and to present to the next meeting the doubts that should occur to them, or that they should find in *commentators*, about the true meaning of difficult passages, with the best solutions of them ; the *one*, beginning at the old Testament, and the *other* at the New. These doubts and solutions were canvassed by the meeting to whom they were presented. If the solution proved universally satisfactory, and yet had something uncommon ; or, in case nothing satisfactory was offered in the society ; in either of these cases, a paper was ordered to be prepared, and laid before the next society, where the subject was resumed. In this manner we proposed to go through the whole Scriptures ; proceeding at every meeting to consider some passages, subsequent to those that had been treated in the former. But this did not hinder any member from proposing his doubt, or difficulty, with relation to any part whatsoever of the Bible, tho' it should not be within the bounds assigned to others ; and, every one had a freedom to propose his doubt, which, he apprehended, had been overlooked by him whose province it was to have brought it in. And such occasional doubts were treated after the same manner as the former.

Another branch of our business was, what we called, *A communication of studies* ; that is, that every member should, at every meeting, communicate to the whole the substance of every thing he found remarkable in the books he had read since the former meeting. By this means, a bookish disposition was encouraged and kept up in all ; every man's reading came to be better digested by his talking it over to his friends ; new matter and questions were often started upon these occasions, that issued in some very agreeable elucidation of the subject in hand ; and, which was best of all, every individual member reaped the benefit of the learning contained in a great variety of curious books, which no single man among them, had
leisure

leisure to read, or perhaps money to purchase; and, for this end, care was taken that the same book should not be bought by any two of them, except where it was of constant and necessary use in the library of every Minister. And, for the better managing this part of our work, we endeavoured to procure the best intelligence we could of the most useful books that were published, in order to our making the best choice of them.

It was a fixed resolution amongst us, that at every meeting we should have a dissertation upon some select subject, and frequently we had two or three, prepared by order of the preceding meeting. The rule which directed our choice of proper subjects, and the manner in which we made it, was this; We resolved, that papers should be prepared on subjects that had importance, as well as some difficulty; carefully avoiding too curious and unscriptural Speculations, which can make no man wiser or better, accounting all *questions* about such matters to be *foolish and unlearned, knowing that they do gender strife*, according to the doctrine of St. Paul, 2 Tim. ii. 23. Under this regulation, every member proposed a subject; and, out of the whole the society chose such of them as were of the greatest moment. For the assistance of the persons appointed to form discourses, the society conferred upon them, and advised them to the books they had seen on those heads. When the discourses were delivered, the conferences were resumed; and, frequently long debates arose, which were managed with great temper and strength of reason; no man disputing for victory, but searching impartially into all that could be said on both sides of a question, for finding the truth. To mention the various subjects of these discourses, would extend this Conclusion to a length, that would bear no proportion to the other parts of this *Appendix*: But, it may not be amiss, for discovering the genius of the *five brethren* (whose characters led me to take notice of this society, and who were it's great ornaments) to name the following. The Divine Existence, and perfections, natural and moral. The foundations of natural Religion and moral obligation. The truth and excellency of the Christian Religion; with the demonstration of it from the intrinsic evidences, taken from the native tendency of the Religion of Christ to restore human nature to it's true dignity, to promote the happiness of mankind, to give us just notions of the Deity, to inspire us with a superlative love to Him, and to direct us to an elevated piety and pure devotion, free from superstition and enthusiasm, perfectly rational and worthy of God. The extrinsic evidences of it's truth were considered; such as miracles, prophecy, the resurrection of Christ, the extraordinary gifts

gifts of the Holy Ghost, and the swift progress and propagation of the Gospel, in opposition to all the secular powers of the world, and the united efforts of all the learning of the Jewish *Rabbi's* and *Heathen* Philosophers, over all which the Gospel triumphed. The objections of Infidels of all kinds were considered. No Men were better qualified for doing justice to these subjects, than the *five Ministers* above-mentioned. For their lives were a strong refutation of that raillery of Infidels, which resolves Christianity into *mere priestcraft*. They disclaimed all power over the consciences of other men, they betook themselves to an employment, that, so far from giving them any prospect of riches and wealth, of great power and authority, could do no more than set them at a decent distance from poverty and want. I hope a great many pastors of the Christian Church (of all persuasions) can, in the same manner, by the holiness of their lives, and by a disinterested zeal, free from all covetous and ambitious views, effectually deliver our Holy Religion from that unworthy imputation; and, I am confident it must be very agreeable to them, to know the services rendered to so glorious a cause, by their deceased brethren.

I must not omit the mention of one subject we had under our consideration in the SOCIETY, which is very worthy of the inquiry of all good Protestants. While Protestants are so unhappily divided amongst themselves and split into different communions, we thought it might be of general use to form a collection of what was good and excellent in them all; to look into the customs and usages of the *Lutherans* and *Calvinists*, the churches of the *Episcopal*, the *Presbyterian*, the *Congregational* forms, the venerable ancient *Vaudois* and *Piedmontese*, who never submitted to *Rome*, and the *Greek* churches. If every church would fall into an imitation of what ever is good and excellent in all her Sister-churches, this would lay a foundation for charity and peace, and assist pastors in their sacred ministrations for attaining to all the true ends of Religion. The Protestant Dissenters, who are not hampered by Canons and Acts of Parliament, have it in their power to chuse, for themselves, the very best customs and practises that have appeared in any age of the Church: And, there are many worthy men within the establishment, who would rejoyce to see such a Collection, as would recommend itself to the sober and wise, of all denominations.

In the SOCIETY, we frequently communicated to one another our experience of what we found to be the most successful way

way of preaching, visiting the sick, comforting and strengthening the weak, reproofing the wicked, and admonishing men of habitually good characters for their faults. and of managing all the parts of the pastoral office. To confirm the general account I have given, I refer the reader to the Circular Letter of the SOCIETY directed to all their Brethren in *Ireland*, dated at *Belfast*, Dec. 7, 1720, intended as an Apology for their Conduct: It had the unanimous approbation of the *five Ministers*, who had a principal share in the framing it. It has the following remarkable Clause * “ We believe that in obedience to the general Rules of the Word of God, applied “ to those circumstances in which Providence hath set us, it “ is our duty to meet in our Society : The improvement of “ Christian Knowledge is a plain duty ; that we should *give* “ *our selves to reading*, is a plain Apostolical Canon ; that we “ should converse upon what we read and meditate, is evidently reasonable. Now, our Society determines nothing but “ the time and place, and such like circumstances of religious “ duties, antecedently and directly prescribed in the Bible, “ tho’ mentioned only in general rules. We declare from “ our experience, and (if our hearts deceive us not) without “ vain glory and affectation, that our meeting in Society hath “ been very profitable to us, for helping us to know the will “ of our Great Lord and Master, and for qualifying us for the “ more faithful discharge of our Ministry.”

The reader cannot but observe, that the SERMON and MEMOIRS take notice, as an ingredient in all the characters of the *five Ministers*, that with zeal they espoused the Cause of Christian Liberty, and made a resolute and bold stand in it’s defence, which exposed them to popular odium and other great inconveniences, against which neither their unexceptionable (nay, their exemplary) moral character, nor their shining gifts could protect them. What *they called* the Cause of Christian Liberty, is not explained in their characters ; and, perhaps, many who have no knowledge of what they meant by it, may suspect that it must have been some monstrous error, unhinging Christianity itself, and striking at the vitals of Religion, that drew upon them such resentment, and issued in a public Breach between their Brethren and them. I think it, therefore, no more than an act of bare justice due to the memory of such worthy men, and a service I owe (I do not say to the Dissenting, but) to the Protestant Interest, to assure all, who want

* *Vide*, A NARRATIVE of the Proceedings of Seven General SYNODS, &c.
P. 27, 28.

want to be satisfied, that the matters comprehended in *their notion* of Christian Liberty, were *extraessential points*, i. e. points in which the essence of Religion did not consist ; such as eminently wise, pious, and learned men have differed, and now do differ about ; and, that it would be very unreasonable and uncharitable, to detract in the least from the glory and merit of an amiable character, whatever side of the Question any man may find himself obliged in the simplicity and sincerity of his heart to embrace, upon an impartial inquiry. It must be very agreeable to all worthy men, to observe the mutual Justice and Charity, that is apparent in the conduct of all the wise and the good towards one another, both *within* and *without* the National Establishment. Have not learned and pious Divines *within it* highly applauded the performances of many of the Dissenters, who have been zealous and learned Advocates for the Cause of Christianity, tho' they knew them to be zealous Dissenters at the same time ; bestowing as liberal encomiums upon their writings as any of their own Brethren have done, warmly recommending them to the perusal of both Clergy and Laity ? Have they not honoured virtuous and shining characters among the Dissenters ? On the other hand, Have not the sober and wise among the Dissenters feasted their eyes, and found an inexpressible joy, in reading the charming good sense, and strains of Piety that are to be found in the writings of many of their Brethren of the established Church ? Have they not greatly admired the lustre of their Virtue in private life ? This charitable temper, for the encrease and prevailing influence whereof good men do daily pray to the God of love and peace, does redound to the credit of pure and undefiled Religion, to the honour of the *Kingdom of God* which consisteth in *righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*, in which the good and the wise are perfectly agreed ; and *not in meat and drink*, lesser matters, wherein they may and do conscientiously differ. And, is not the case the very same with respect to the different denominations of Protestant-Dissenters, whose differences are not wider than those which subsist between the established Church, and the whole Dissenting Body, nor more important ? And, why then should not people of all denominations among them, treat one anothers characters with the same decency and esteem that other good Protestants have discovered for them, notwithstanding of their different way of thinking in other matters ; and with the same regard, that themselves have shown to the worthy characters of others of a different persuasion from the whole Body ?

If any one wants a detail of the whole controversy that was for divers years managed in Synods, and was carried to the Press by the contending Parties, he ought to peruse the writings published on both sides. But, my present design being only to set before the Reader some valuable characters that merit his attention, it would be impertinent in me to divert him, by matters of debate, from a serious consideration of what will be universally acknowledged to be, beyond all debate, truly good and excellent. One thing, indeed, I think may and ought to be done, very consistently with my professed intention as a PUBLISHER; nay, in a plain subserviency to it, because it may promote Charity by removing or preventing mistakes. What I mean, is, to put it in the Reader's power to see clearly and distinctly the notions of Christian Liberty maintained by the *five Ministers*, and by all who concurred in opinion with them, expressed in *their own words*. Their Sentiments are contained in SIX PROPOSITIONS, drawn up by themselves, which the Reader will find at the foot of the page, * if he has any curiosity to look into them; whether those

Propositions

* PROP. I. OUR Lord Jesus Christ, the only Head, King and Lawgiver to His Church, hath by his invariable Laws, recorded in the New Testament, perfectly and sufficiently determined all the conditions and terms which the Christian Church, or any part of it, or any private member or members, or any officer or officers in it, considered in either his or their relation to particular churches or congregations, or the Catholick Church, or to Ecclesiastical associations and assemblies, ought to comply with, in order to their being qualified for, received into, and continued in external Religious Communion, whether Ministerial or Christian, in the visible Church. All Christians who comply with Christ's Terms, have a right by the Gospel Charter to be received into Religious Communion in all Churches in which they are called to it, and no Church or sett of uninspired men whether met in Synods, Councils, or any other society, have any power from Christ to add any other terms of Religious Communion to those he had settled in the Gospel; and whenever they presume to do so, all their decisions, laws and canons, and all the penal sanctions annexed to them, are null and void in themselves, not only for want of a competent authority to enact them, but for their contrariety to some plain and important Laws of the Gospel, wherein the blessed Head of the Church hath reserved to himself the peculiar power and prerogative of enacting and prescribing all necessary conditions and terms of our Religious Communion; and when Christians refuse compliance with such impositions, they are so far from being guilty of despising lawful authority that their pious zeal for the Scriptural Purity and Catholick Simplicity of Religious Communion ought to be commended after the example of St. Paul, who in such a case *would not give place by subjection, no not for an hour, that the truth of the Gospel might be continued*, Gal. ii. 5.

PROP. II. CANDIDATES for the holy Ministry may give clear and sufficient evidence of their Soundness in the Faith, without subscribing or professing an assent to any one imposed uninspired Form of Articles or Confession of Faith; and they may as fully satisfy their ordainers, concerning their fitness to preach the Christian Faith, without subscribing any such Confession, as they may prove their aptness to preside in the publick Worship of God, without declaring their assent to any prescribed Human Liturgy or Form of Prayer.

Propositions be true or false, just or unjust, is not the business of this paper to determine. I will not offer one single word in their Defence; nor can any one expect, that I should say any thing against them. The sole reason I had for taking any notice of them here, was to show *what they were not*; of which
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PROP. III. WE are humbly of opinion that the great Head of the Church, hath given no power to the Church to make any Canon or Religious Law by which an intrant into the Ministry who gives sufficient proof of his Soundness in the Faith, and of his having all the other ministerial qualifications and abilities required in the Gospel, shall be refused licence to preach the Gospel, ordination or instalment, merely because he refuseth to give his assent or subscription to the Westminster-Confession, or to any one Uninspired Confession, as the sole and exclusive test and standard of Orthodoxy and Term of Ministerial Communion; and seeing Christ himself hath neither made, nor given any Power to others to make any such Law, it ought to be treated and considered by all persons affected by it as NULL and VOID in it self: And it is the Duty, of Ministers to licence, ordain, and instal, upon a regular application, all who are qualified according to the Gospel, any pretended Law or Canon of any Church whatsoever to the contrary notwithstanding.

PROP. IV. To impose a Declaration of Assent to the *Westminster-Confession* upon parents, as the condition of the Baptism of their children, is to add a new Term of Communion which Christ never appointed; to encourage implicit Faith, and the taking of the Name of God in vain, by the greatest number of parents, whose capacity, education and opportunities can't be supposed sufficient to enable them to make such a profession with understanding and judgment; is an arbitrary refusal of a Seal of the Christian Covenant, and a gross abuse of the Pastoral Office; therefore we can't in conscience join in any such Imposition, tho' we scruple not to give our publick advice and recommendation to parents, at the Baptism of their children, seriously to peruse the Westminster-Confession and Catechisms, as a good Summary of the main heads of the Christian Doctrine, comparing them with the Word of God; that *their Faith stand not in the wisdom of men, but in the Power of God*; and that they would use them as good helps for their growth in knowledge, and for instructing their children.

PROP. V. THE requiring from the members of our judicatories, or from any other Christian in communion with us, Declarations of Faith, upon the Penalty of Noncommunion, while the person required to make such declarations stands in judgment upon an accusation, and cannot be fairly convicted upon evidence; or, for removing of jealousies, even tho' the declaration should be required from an apprehension in the judicatory requiring it, that it will contribute to the glory of God, and the edification of Souls, appears to us to be a new Term of Communion which Christ hath not prescribed; and the setting up in the Church an EXHORBITANT and ARBITRARY Power, contrary to the essential rights of Natural Equity, evasive of Christian Discipline; a snare to conscience, destructive of the Liberties of Christians, and the holding of an inquisition, justly complain'd of, and clearly refuted from the Holy Scriptures by the most pious and learned Protestants of all persuasions; and a tame submission to such Claims of Power, and a compliance with its demands, even tho' the Article to be declared should appear true and important to him upon whom the Declaration is imposed, appears to us to be a sinful Violation of some plain and important Laws of the Gospel.

PROP. VI. SUBSCRIPTIONS and Declarations, which are called VOLUNTARY, when the subscribers and declarers know that the non-subscribers and non-declarers must incur a popular odium, and are in danger of being rendered useless in the work of the Ministry, with respect to many at least, who they know will break Communion with them on that score, seem to us not to be really voluntary; but to carry with them all the force and sting of real impositions, loaded with heavy and severe Penalties, and therefore we can't in Conscience comply with them.

no man can have any evidence so short, and yet so full and so satisfactory, as by seeing what *they actually were*. I am confident all unprejudiced Readers, and I would gladly hope that even the most scrupulous, will freely acknowledge that they contain nothing heretical, nothing inconsistent with the essential Principles of Christianity or an Holy Life, nothing that will exclude any man from the Favour of God and the hope of Eternal Life ; and, nothing that can extinguish, or even diminish, *the peace and joy of believing*. If this be granted, which I cannot well suppose any sound knowing Protestant capable of denying, I have all that I aim at. When this Divine Principle I have been advancing shall universally prevail, and be justly applied in all cases that will bear an application, then shall true worth command the respect of all honest men, and be impartially regarded by men of all parties. Then shall no man be admired, and no man be contemned, meerly for his being of *this*, or *that* denomination ; nothing but real goodness will establish his character, and nothing but the want of it will make any man *look little* and contemptible in the world. According to this equitable rule, did *those five* good men conduct themselves in the judgment they formed of other men ; and both Justice and Charity require, that their own characters, which can stand the Test of it, should remain firm and unshaken in the esteem of all who have any regard for eminent virtue and real worth.

O ! happy day, for them, that has carried these dear Great Souls from a world of strife and vanity into the peaceful undisturbed Regions of perfect Love and Joy, where every man of true Charity will suppose them to be singing, in raptures of praise and triumph, that blessed Song, *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father ; to him be Glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

In order to our being possessed, in due time, of the happiness they enjoy ; let us faithfully imitate the real goodness that adorned their Christian Profession ; let us be followers of them in all things wherein they were followers of Christ ; and to our most pious endeavours let us add our fervent Prayers, that *the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, thro' the blood of the everlasting Covenant, would make us perfect in every good work to do His Will, working in us that which is well pleasing in His Sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

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